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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001083

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/PB AND SCA/FO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH ARMY CHIEF ASSURES PACAF COMMANDER  
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION ON TRACK

REF: DHAKA 1075 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Geeta Pasi. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

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¶1. (C) During a meeting with the visiting Commander of U.S. Air Forces Pacific, Bangladesh's Chief of Army Staff reiterated his commitment to seeing elections take place on schedule. Both agreed the Bangladesh Army had played a critical role in providing support to the Caretaker Government since the January 2007 State of Emergency. With two months remaining before elections, the Army appears committed to seeing the transition to democracy take place. The USG has a critical role to play in ensuring that all parties remain committed to keeping the process on track.

General Chandler's Visit to Bangladesh

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¶2. (C) Commander U.S. Air Forces Pacific General Carroll Chandler visited Bangladesh October 15 - 16 as an envoy for Commander U.S. Pacific Command Admiral Timothy Keating. The visit came two months prior to Bangladesh's December 18 parliamentary elections and was intended to signal to the Bangladeshi military leadership the importance of a smooth return of democracy. During his 36 hour stay in Bangladesh, General Chandler met with Chief of Army Staff General Moeen Uddin Ahmed, attended a dinner in his honor hosted by the Bangladesh Army's Quartermaster General, and spoke briefly with the press.

Meeting with Chief of Army Staff General Moeen Uddin Ahmed

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¶3. (C) General Chandler congratulated General Moeen on his selection for admission into the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College International Hall of Fame and invited him to visit Pacific Command Headquarters en route to the induction ceremony. Moeen appreciated the honor of his selection for the Hall of Fame and thanked General Chandler for the invitation to visit Hawaii.

¶4. (C) General Chandler complimented the Army Chief on the Bangladesh Military's string of major accomplishments since a State of Emergency was imposed in January 2007. Moeen admitted that the past year had been difficult, with natural disasters (including two cycles of floods and a cyclone), high food and fuel prices, and the challenge of completing the national photo voter registration drive. Completing these tasks had put a strain on the Bangladesh military, but

in the end all of these had been completed successfully. Chandler noted that these accomplishments had helped prepare the country for elections and had set the stage for future development.

15. (C) General Chandler noted that past military-military engagement between the U.S. and Bangladesh had facilitated our cooperation in the wake of the November 2007 cyclone. Moeen agreed, adding that our two armed forces had also worked together in Haiti and in other peacekeeping operations.

16. (C) Turning to elections, Moeen explained that from the beginning the Caretaker Government and military had set as their goal organizing free, fair and credible elections. Moeen said that he had never deviated from the goal of holding elections, and added that conditions in Bangladesh had changed for the better over the past 20 months. While there had been tactical shifts and some compromises, there had not been any deviation from the main goal of holding elections. Moeen acknowledged compromises on the anti-corruption drive but argued that these were necessary in order to create the conditions for elections.

17. (C) The Ambassador, Moeen, and Chandler also discussed the impact of the global financial crisis. Moeen noted that the shock waves sent out from the U.S., the epicenter of the financial crisis would inevitably affect countries around the world. For this reason, Bangladesh hoped that the steps taken by the U.S. administration to respond to the crisis would prove effective.

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18. (S) Regarding counter terrorism cooperation, Moeen saluted the USG's willingness to find a way to engage with the Rapid Action Battalion. Moeen noted this was Bangladesh's premiere counter terrorism organization, and argued that its training was essential. Moeen and Chandler also agreed on the need to improve sharing of intelligence, both internally within each government and also between the two. General Chandler noted the successes the USG had achieved since 9/11 in improving internal intelligence sharing. Moeen noted that there had also been some progress within Bangladesh in this regard.

19. (C) Touching briefly on his post-retirement plans, Moeen shared his desire to open a school for underprivileged youth whose only education was provided currently in madrassas. He wanted to give these children an opportunity to prepare themselves to prosper in the modern world.

Dinner Hosted by Bangladesh Army

10. (C) In General Moeen's absence, the Bangladesh Army Quartermaster General LTG Jahangir hosted a dinner in General Chandler's honor. The dinner was attended by two of the Bangladesh Army's three star Generals, and over a dozen two stars. In their remarks at the end of dinner, both Chandler and Jahangir praised the bilateral military-military relationship. General Chandler also noted the Bangladesh Army's steadfast support for the civilian government and highlighted the importance of a return to democracy after the December elections.

Press

11. (U) Following his meeting with General Moeen, General Chandler spoke briefly with the press. He emphasized the strength of bilateral military-military ties and praised the positive contributions of the Bangladesh military during past two years. Chandler declined to respond to questions on overtly political issues, such as the lifting of the State of Emergency.

Comment  
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¶12. (C) General Chandler's visit to Dhaka as Admiral Keating's envoy capped off an important week in Bangladesh's return to democracy. It is of vital importance to U.S. interests that this populous Muslim-majority country with a history of indigenous and international terrorist links complete its transition towards democracy. This week, the Ambassador met with former Prime Minister Begum Zia and with two of the Caretaker Government's principal political negotiators to deliver a message regarding the importance of the democratic transition. General Chandler's visit allowed us to deliver this same message to the army leadership. With our range of contacts within the political parties, the Caretaker Government, and military, we are uniquely positioned to help bridge the communication and confidence gap among players here. Our active role helps ensure that all parties have the confidence to move forward along the path towards elections in December.

¶13. (U) General Chandler did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.  
Moriarty